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**REMARKS  
BY  
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BGMEA UNIVERSITY OF FASHION AND TECHNOLOGY  
DESIGN STUDIO AND DISPLAY CENTER  
HANDOVER CEREMONY  
BY  
AMERICAN & EFIRD BANGLADESH  
BUFT, S.R. TOWER, 105 UTTARA, DHAKA  
JULY 21, 2013**

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And so many friends of Bangladesh's readymade garment industry

Asalaam 'malaikum and good afternoon

Mark this date: July 21, 2013

I hope this date will be historic ... a date to celebrate ... for several reasons.

First, of course, we celebrate this exciting partnership between BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology and American and Efird ...

How great is this ...

A&E Bangladesh and BUFT have partnered to design and construct this state-of-the art Design Studio and Display Center ... how awesome ...

And today we mark the handover of this facility to the university ...

That alone would make this date memorable ... and I want to thank American and Efir LLC, one of the world's foremost manufacturers of industrial sewing and embroidery thread ... and based in the great state of North Carolina ... for making this partnership possible.

This Design Studio and Display Center and the BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology itself speak volumes about how Bangladesh is developing its own home grown creative and managerial talent and technical capacities, about how Bangladesh is moving up the RMG value chain. Be impressed ... right here before us is the future of Bangladesh's RMG sector.

But I think this date may be memorable for another reason.

Our celebration today ... July 21, 2013 ... here at BUFT ... might, just might mark the turning point ending a tragic chapter in the history of Bangladesh's readymade garment industry.

These past months have witnessed terrible, gut-wrenching tragedy in the RMG sector ... tragedy that could have been/should have been avoided.

We know the story:

- Tazreen Fashions fire, November 24, 2012, 110 dead
- Smart Fashions fire, January 26, 2013, 7 dead
- Rana Plaza building collapse, April 24, 2013, 1,129 dead
- Gallons of negative ink in the leading newspapers around the world, including the New York Times, Financial Times and every other newspaper, including my hometown paper in remote Iowa, where my 92 year old mother wept over the deaths and charged her son (me!) with not doing enough to ensure that workers are safe.
- The hours of heartbreaking video footage on televisions everywhere as CNN and other channels continue to tell the sad stories of these tragedies and their victims.

These past months have indeed been dark ones for Bangladesh and for the RMG sector. But my mother always told me that life's darkest clouds can have silver linings. And I believe these dark tragedies of recent months do in fact have a silver lining.

At a huge, tragic cost in human terms, Bangladesh, in my opinion, now better understands that the RMG industry cannot endure more Rana Plaza and Tazreen Fashions disasters; Bangladesh now better understands that if its RMG sector is to thrive and grow, the nation must ensure respect for workers' rights to freely associate and organize and to work in safe conditions, the nation must ensure that all factories meet minimum standards for fire safety and factory structural soundness.

And Bangladesh is not alone in better understanding that "business as usual" in the RMG sector is no longer acceptable. The Brands and buyers now share this understanding; consumers share this

understanding; international organizations like the International Labor Organization and others share this understanding; Bangladesh's friends like America, Europe and others share this understanding. Indeed, something big may be happening; a new era in the Bangladesh RMG sector may be beginning.

That's why the happiness of today's celebration marking the handover by A&E Bangladesh of this Design Studio and Display Center to BUFT may mark something more. I think/I hope we today are also celebrating a possible shift in the RMG sector's trajectory from the negativity of the past months to a positive one, one where all stakeholders ... owners, workers, buyers, consumers, civil society, ILO, international partners like America ... all stakeholders come together to forge a new path for the industry, a path that will spare Bangladesh repetitions of these horrible tragedies, a path that will make Bangladesh a Preferred Brand in the global market place.

These days are witnessing some most encouraging developments that give me great hope that Bangladesh's RMG sector is indeed turning a corner. Let me cite a few examples:

- On July 8 in Geneva, Bangladesh and the EU in association with the ILO adopted a Compact to ensure the sustainability of the Bangladesh RMG and knitwear sectors through continuous improvements in labor rights and factory safety.
- On July 19 the United States associated itself with this Compact as America looks forward to working as a full partner with the EU, Bangladesh and ILO to implement the goals of the Compact.
- The U.S. released last Friday the Action Plan that lays out a road map for Bangladesh to regain its GSP privileges with America. Many of the steps identified in the Action Plan align closely with the commitments laid out in the Compact in regard to workers' rights to freely associate and organize and to work in safe conditions.
- I am already engaging with the Government of Bangladesh on how best to proceed in addressing the points raised in the road map so Bangladesh can again qualify for GSP privileges.
- On July 15, the Bangladesh parliament passed legislation amending the Bangladesh Labor Law. We are still translating and reviewing the document and hope the amendments create an environment that enables the ILO to launch a Better Work program later this year. This, too, would be a major positive development.
- Over the past week, the buyers have announced two groupings -- the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety and the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh -- that commit the buyers to source only from safe factories and to help factories with safety shortcomings to redress those deficiencies so they meet standards.

- The ILO is seeking funding for a major initiative that would enable the ILO and Bangladesh government to work together to develop mechanisms for bringing all the various initiatives to address safety and labor issues into a cogent, uniform undertaking that would ensure that all/all RMG and knitwear factories are brought up to safety and labor rights standards.
- Meanwhile, America and other friends of Bangladesh are funding various undertakings to address specific concerns in the RMG sector.

As you can see from this abbreviated listing, much is happening to restructure the RMG industry ... and I am most encouraged.

Strong, dynamic, profitable RMG and knitwear industries, where workers are fairly compensated and fairly treated and where working conditions are safe, are the driving force in realizing my vision of Middle-Income Bangladesh, a Bangladesh where all have the means to provide their families safe, secure housing, ample, nutritious food, good healthcare and quality education. I envision Bangladesh as the number one exporter of RMG in the world, replacing China. This, of course, cannot happen until all RMG/knitwear factories meet minimum labor and work place standards, until Bangladesh is safe from repetitions of the Tazreen Fashions or Rana Plaza disasters, until Bangladesh becomes a Preferred Brand.

So, today ... July 21, 2013 ... is truly an historic day ... a day celebrating the A&E and BUFT partnership as evidenced in this delightful facility ... a day marking, I hope, a pivotal turning point in Bangladesh's RMG sector as it begins down a path to becoming a Premium Brand, a Preferred Brand, a source country known for taking good care of its workers ... truly a Preferred Brand in the global market place.

As I stand before you now, I commit myself, I commit my mission to do whatever we can to support this transformation of the RMG sector so Brand Bangladesh becomes a premium brand, so Bangladesh can become the next Asian Tiger.

Thank you.

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*\*As prepared for delivery*